

The Daily Herald
September 25th 1913

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT

ADOPTION MOVED BY MR. CONEYBEER

AN INFORMATIVE SPEECH

ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

gested that the Director of Education should also be secretary to the Minister of Education, and be particularly responsible for primary education. Under the director there would be superintendents of secondary, technical, and agricultural education, and the appointment of an honorary council of education was recommended. The School Teachers' Union had complained that there were too many subjects to be taught in the schools, and after hearing a good deal of evidence the commission recommended the appointment of a curriculum board, consisting of the Chief Inspector of Schools, the superintendents of secondary and technical education, and one member elected by the whole of the teachers in the State, to assist the director in arranging the curriculum. South Australia was not doing enough in the way of agricultural and technical education, and that was a matter he intended to deal with at a later stage. Mr. Coneybeer obtained leave to continue his remarks on October 29.

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EDUCATION COMMISSION.

Mr. CONEYBEER moved—"That the report of the Royal Commission on Education be adopted by the House." He paid a high tribute to the late Director of Education (Mr. Alfred Williams), who possessed great energy, earnestness, and great organizing ability. He had been cut off on the eve of the achievement of many reforms he had initiated. His name would ever be remembered with love and respect in South Australia. He was sorry that the Chairman of the Commission (Mr. T. Ryan) was not in the House to move that motion. Mr. Ryan was instrumental in bringing the commission into existence. It was the duty of the State to give every assistance to the parents to send their children into the world well equipped. They prided themselves that they had done well in the past, and had no need to be ashamed of their work. He claimed that with the adoption of the report they would have an educational system in South Australia second to none in the Commonwealth. As a State they could not afford to lag behind in educational work. It would mean increased expenditure. Every nation in the world recognised that it was its duty to spend money in connection with education, and that it was well spent, and invested in the interests of the State. Poverty must not be a bar in the way of a boy to develop the best in him. As the result of the work of the commission three progress reports had been presented to the House, and two Bills had been submitted and passed through both branches of the Legislature. No commission could have been more industrious. The University needed linking up with the schools. The whole scheme of education should be remodelled. There should be a Director of Education in charge of the whole department, who should be Secretary to the Minister, because he was the closest link. The Director would be particularly responsible for the primary schools. In the past they had evaded the Director too much. He asked leave to continue his remarks on October 29.

Leave granted.

Mr. Coneybeer moved—"That the report of the Royal Commission on Education be adopted by this House." He said no more fitting time could be selected than when dealing with a comprehensive educational report to make reference to the death of one who did much for the young people of this State. He referred to the former Director of Education, the late Mr. Alfred Williams. They all regretted his death at a comparatively early age and deplored his loss to the educational world. He had the pleasure of Mr. Williams' acquaintance for a number of years, and the honor of presiding over the Education Department in two Governments when he was Director. Coming in close touch with him he knew his worth and was conscious of the valuable assistance he was always ready to render. He wished that the chairman of the Education Commission (Mr. Ryan) were in the House to move the adoption of the report. It was owing to Mr. Ryan's energy on behalf of education that the House carried the motion for the Select Committee dealing with the University, which Committee was afterwards appointed a Royal Commission to enquire into all phases of the education question. As a member of the commission he wished to pay a tribute to Mr. Ryan's earnestness, industry, and ability. The task of moving the adoption of the report of the Education Commission was not an easy one. He approached it with feelings of pleasure and pride, fortified by the knowledge of the importance and far-reaching nature of the recommendations, and with a feeling that he would have the sympathy and support of members in the efforts made on behalf of the children of South Australia.

As he had remarked before in that House, their hopes, ambitions, and desires for their own children blended with their feelings of responsibility to the children in every part of the State stimulated their desire, and quickened their resolve to afford them every opportunity to become clear-headed, industrious, skillful, and worthy men and women with the grit of their forefathers, and also with intelligence and quickness, and trained to meet the demands of the more strenuous times ahead. It was with that aim that the commission set out to ascertain what was done in other parts of Australia from an educational standpoint, and to pick out the best parts and graft them on the South Australian system, ever having in mind the need of a good foundation, and the provision of the means to lead the children to the higher educational institutions of the State. It was the duty of the State to afford every assistance to its people to send their children into the world strong in body, character, and intellect, equipped to fight the battle of life and with a strong sense of their obligations to their fellows. They prided themselves that they had done well in the past. They had no need to be ashamed of their work, but with the changing conditions of economic affairs with the growing strain and stress of industrial competition, the importance of the school as an agent in social well-being and progress was being more strongly emphasised, and the obligations upon the Parliament to make it effective more clearly recognised. Almost every nation in the world, as well as the Australian States, was spending large and still larger sums of money in the educational equipment of their children. In framing the report members of the commission endeavored to put their house in order by bringing the South Australian system up to date. He claimed with the adoption of this work this State would have an educational system second to none in the Australian States. In looking back he failed to see any work left untouched by the commission. He rather feared some would say they took notice of things that merited none, but it was the safer side to err on. They could not as a State afford to lag in their educational

work. What it would mean increased expenditure, they must realise, as other nations did, that the money was well invested in building up an educational system that would equip their people and make them more valuable citizens and a greater asset to the State.

Could they in South Australia regard the educational facilities of our country districts with satisfaction? Were they doing enough to stimulate in the hearts of our country children a desire for self-culture and self-realisation? The fifth class of elementary school was as high a standard as many might be expected to reach; but there were many others whose natural ability made further development not only possible but highly desirable. Unless such boys proceeded beyond the elementary school stage not only was their working capital, their knowledge and skill lamentably meagre, but their opportunities all too limited. The late Mr. Williams said—"We cannot afford to allow talent to be buried. Ignorance is the dearest thing in the world." When we realised fully the significance of that statement we would experience a great awakening and hasten to recover lost ground. The time was ripe for change in educational methods, for following the example of every progressive nation in the world, in providing greater educational advantages for our children, as well as for our young men and women. This was proposed in the report, and he believed it would meet with the hearty support of non-members. He need say no more in the way of a leading for the improvement and extension of their educational facilities in the State, as recommended within the four corners of the Commission's report, for he felt sure hon. members were persuaded that these were the things which opened the portals of national happiness and prosperity.

The adoption of the report would mean an increase of expenditure. But every nation in the world recognised it was their duty to spend more money, and that money devoted to education was well spent. It was not a matter of expenditure, but of investment in the interests of the State. South Australians could not afford to stand by and see other nations pass them, and although they had done much, they must realise there was still much to be done. This was not the time to fall asleep by the wayside. He had been much struck by the contention of an educational authority in England, some time ago, that it was better for the State to spend its tens of thousands of pounds in the construction of technical and high schools than in the building of prisons to accommodate the children whom they had left in ignorance to battle against the world without help and without education. He agreed with that sentiment. To spend the money on schools would mean a saving in the long run. They must have a well-laid foundation for their education system, and South Australia could congratulate itself on the excellent work done. When he returned from England the late Director of Education said from the standpoint of primary education South Australia had nothing much to learn from the other countries of the world. They had laid an excellent foundation, but there they had stopped—at least, so far as the poor man's children were concerned.

The commission in the last 12 months had covered a very wide field, but in view of the scope of enquiry that was unavoidable. As far as possible the evidence was confined to those branches of education work in which reforms were desirable, and that day he intended to deal with the principal suggestions made for the improvement of the educational system. Free and compulsory education up to the primary standard had been the settled policy of all the Australian States for many years. South Australia took the first step, they were proud to think, in secondary education by the provision

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"EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY."

At the Brookman Hall, School of Mines, this evening, Mr. Albert Mansbridge, M.A., general secretary of the Workers' Educational Association of England, will deliver a free public lecture on "Education and Democracy." Mr. Mansbridge, in his address at the University on Monday evening, created an excellent impression by his lucid manner of explaining the association's scheme for University tutorial work amongst the workers. All who heard him will be anxious to do so again. The council of the School of Mines extend a hearty invitation to all interested to attend.